

Moon Gazing in December

Witnessing the eternal mythological battle

By **Kat Avila** | Published on LatinoLA: December 13, 2011



A sharp pitter-pattering on the skylight wakes me up. It is raining today on Monday, December 12, the day of Our Lady of Guadalupe (or Tonantzin, whose worship she displaced).

The celebrated Virgin of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, is distantly related to Coatlicue. "She of the Serpent Skirt" is the 3D Aztec poem of cosmic life and death. Coatlicue bore 400 stellar sons (the Centzonhuitznahuac), the lunar goddess Coyolxauhqui, and the solar and war god Huitzilopochtli.

Coatlicue is the Mother Earth you have nightmares about. Quite unlike the one portrayed in the classic Chiffon margarine commercial. In that ad, the thunder clap-summoning goddess wears a head garland of daisies and is dressed in white for a happy-peppy spring equinox celebration.

This fierce Aztec deity is headless. Two great snakeheads - fanged and facing each other - form the illusion of a face. These snakes represent gushing veins of blood. The illusion can be viewed as one head or two, "a visual pun typical of native American art" (R. Cavendish, MYTHOLOGY, p. 252).

She flaunts a gory necklace of thick human hands and hearts that ends in a round-eyed skull pendant, which doubles as a belt buckle. Beneath her necklace, her exposed breasts are flat tires, having "nursed both the gods and mankind" (A. Caso, THE AZTECS, p. 53).

On her back, another skull fastens a double fan of thongs to her belt. Her snake cord belt, knotted in front, holds up a virile skirt of tangled, writhing snakes. Like a character in a fantasy video game battle, her serpent-head hands are fanged and her feet are clawed.

The great romance of the origin of the universe begins with Coatlicue enjoying the domestic life, sweeping the temple grounds on Serpent Mountain. A downy ball of feathers falls before her. She tucks the ball into her skirt where it quickly disappears.

She searches for the found art object, but to no avail. Later she discovers she is pregnant. This surprise pregnancy angers everyone. Her lunar goddess daughter and her many stellar sons decide to kill their own mother, doing a reverse *La Llorona*.

Coyolxauhqui leads the attack, unaware one of her bright brothers has already betrayed them. That brother has warned the unborn Huitzilopochtli. The solar god bursts forth fully grown from his mother's womb to slay the night.

So it was again at 6:00 a.m. this past Saturday. I gazed up at the last lunar eclipse of 2011. Through my birding binoculars, I watched as light began to resaturate the smoky gray full moon from a bright sliver.

But even as the moon moved out of the Earth's shadow, Coyolxauhqui could not avoid her fate.

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She paled and faded before the glorious strength of her approaching brother.

Note: The artistic representation of Coatlicue being referred to in this story is the statue at the Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology) in Mexico City.

A writer who is looking forward to the Winter Solstice on December 21 at 9:30 p.m. PST. After that day, it means a better chance of defrosting after waiting for the evening bus.

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